

rubber duck 'verse compilation by handydandynotebook

Series: [how the actual duck am i writing any of this bizarro ass 'verse](#)
[\[1\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Child Abuse, Headcanon, Kid Fic, Minor Character Death, Modern Era, Originally Posted on Tumblr, Rubber Ducks, Trans Female Character, and i am too attached to lose it, but ik tumblr eats and deletes at times, not a full on fic

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Neil Hargrove, Original Child Character(s), Susan Hargrove

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-06-06

Updated: 2021-06-06

Packaged: 2022-03-31 15:02:00

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,065

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

That one scenario where Billy and Max raise their younger shared half-sibling, who has quite an affinity for rubber ducks.

rubber duck 'verse compilation

Author's Note:

this is p much just copy and pasted from my tumblr, ahh. anon asked me abt a not-fic where susan gets to keep a bby, ig instead of abortion/miscarriage like i've written before, and it got unexpectedly long and i got unexpectedly attached to it.

ik it's not rly a fic fic per se, but. i heard tumblr eating/deleting shit sometimes and i don't want to lose it, okay? i'm v attached to my duck child oc now!! and i've seen other ppl post headcanon/scenario works rather than outright fic fics, so i'm p sure this is legal.

linking is not as smooth on ao3 as on tumblr so the relevant informational links i'd included there will be in the end notes here.

my (slightly modified) original answer:

okay, okay, so in this particular scenario, i actually imagine neil was putting 2 + 2 together and finding out susan's preggo right after the move. like, even before susan does. and she's all kinds of alarmed but neil is?? oddly excited?

he's all like, "isn't this great? we get to have a new baby in this new town. what a perfect way to cement our brand new life, huh?"

and susan doesn't want to be hopeful but with neil's positive reaction, she tentatively feels hope anyway. maybe things rly will be different, right?

yeah, well, neil's good mood lasts until it's actually born and responsibilities ensue. he never had to deal with billy as a baby rly, bc billy's mom took care of that part and also, like. in this 'verse at least, billy was a low-maintenance baby. didn't cry much. maybe he did at first but like, after being dropped on the head a couple times,

he just went quiet and didn't rly bother anybody after that. wouldn't get loud again until elementary age. and max didn't come into neil's life until she was even elementary age, so defo past all the baby stuff.

the new infant tho screams like a mofo. everybody in the house is on edge. sleep is hard to come by for the whole household. the care and keeping responsibilities mostly fall on susan but neil holds it against her every. single. time. he has to change a diaper or hold a bottle, as if it's some major failing on susan's part that he should ever have to do anything like this at all.

max tries to help but she can't even hold the baby tbh. it makes her v uncomfortable, she never gets it right and doesn't know what to do when it squirms!! what if she drops it!? plus she thinks baby smells weird even when it's got a clean diaper, an unappealing mashed food and powder combo with a lingering whiff of wet rubber. and billy. is billy. he has to watch it sometimes, naturally. if it's just him and baby at home, he'll blast his stereo to cover up the crying, as long as he knows its other needs have been tended to. like, yk, the "it'll cry itself to sleep eventually," approach. which works actually. metallica becomes the go-to baby lullaby.

but lo and behold, when it's like, let's say 6 months or smth, baby gets an ear infection. like babies do. won't stop wailing. just. will NOT stop. v much in pain and has no other means of communication. neil and max are home. billy is on a date. susan's stuck in a long line at the grocery store. neil had a shitty day at work and he's already aggravated. pacifier isn't working, lil thing just keeps hollering, so. in a burst of frustration, he starts throttling baby. max is in her own room but hears it the second the noises change and hurries to help, blood ice cold.

she stops neil from killing baby sibling but gets a black eye and a bloody nose for her troubles. this is what susan comes home to. i've written a lot of susan kills neil scenarios but i think this is the first one that comes to mind where in this round, it really is out of anger and not fear. both are present, ofc. but the actual act on her part is one of anger. bc she feels stupid that he ever had her the slightest bit convinced a new baby would make anything better. that neil ever made her feel like he'd be better and instead, he chose to be even worse. susan ties him to the bedposts under the guise of a sex thing,

convincing neil she wants to treat him to smth special bc he's been oh so stressed out lately. bashes his brains in with a hammer at least 20 times, a la sally challen style.

alas, reality commences and susan goes to prison. ig a long time ago there was this made for tv movie abt this lady killing her abusive husband by setting the bed aflame that gave the public the misconception that women who kill their abusers are typically acquitted, but uh, that's not true. yeah, it was true for the lady whom the movie was based off of, but usually they're convicted and serve unduly harsh sentences for their "crimes." but if i get on that soap box, we gonna be here the whole fucking day, so, moving on now. susan's off to the big house. albeit both baby and max's injuries are documented and considered mitigating circumstances so her charges are reduced from first degree murder to voluntary manslaughter with the potential for early release.

billy's close to 19 so he's an adult, if only technically speaking. has custody of baby and max. i've decided baby in this 'verse is amab but will eventually come out as trans when she's abt ten yrs old. billy tries his best. max tries her best too. baby's nickname is ducky bc the rubber duck?? by far the favorite toy!! baby p much lives in the bathtub, playing with the rubber duck. billy, who would move them back to cali in a heartbeat if it wasn't so far from susan's prison, defo relates. he's also aquatic by nature.

okay, so the move back to cali does happen. over the months of her kids coming to visit her in prison susan can see how exhausted the teenagers are and she's p much just like, 'u guys gotta go. get outta this rural heckhole u hate, stop bringing urselves n my bby to this dismal place.' and they don't think she's serious but the next time they come to visit, she doesn't meet them, so. yup. serious it is. billy, max, n baby take neil's life insurance money and head off to cali.

this is a modern au, okay, inmates sneaking smartphones into the prison n all that. so susan makes deals and friends and does favors, and gets some help from the ones who are good at bitcoin and scams and counterfeiting and what have you. this enables her to do discreet online "shopping." so she gets ducky all kinds of rubber ducks, at least a handful of times a year. the ducks get more unique and less childish as ducky grows. susan apologizes almost every time she talks

to the older kids on the phone for like, five yrs. max isn't rly angry with how things ended with neil tho, more so has that residual anger that susan ever got together with neil in the first place. billy doesn't rly know what to feel tbh, accepts the apologies p numbly bc he's too damn exhausted with being the primary caregiver in over his head to even think abt how he feels at the end of the day.

susan gets released on good behavior around the same time ducky comes out, announcing she's a girl. it's an adjustment for billy and max to get used to bc they never rly suspected, but they're 100% supportive. susan is...oddly excited? not for selfless reasons (tho she is earnestly supportive) but bc it's like. not only does that mean trashing the masculine deadname neil had adamantly declared for ducky, but it means all in all, she got out at the perfect time bc she gets to be introduced to the authentic version of her child along w errbody else. makes her feel less left behind, like she didn't miss out on errything despite being put away for a decade. susan moves in with all of them, obvi, in a small house by the seaside filled to the brim with rubber ducks (billy and max also contributed to ducky's collection on birthdays and holidays, the first duck billy ever got has skulls, and the first max ever got is a frankenstein monster duck). home is cluttered, awkward, and tentative but free of fear and ripe with *genuine* new beginnings.

more detailed tidbits after i found myself attached:

max's residual anger toward susan is complicated. she's angry that her mother ever got together with someone like neil, that she spent yrs growing up in fear and that she has to bear the impact of that by proxy of susan's decision to marry neil. but she also loves her siblings v much and she wouldn't have them if susan didn't get together with neil, and that gives her all kinds of weird feelings. acknowledges her mother was also a victim in the situation, isn't rly angry at how it ended with neil but nonetheless wishes the rest of them could've left sooner— and left without the bloodshed —bc she defo believes neil deserved what he got, but she doesn't believe susan or the rest of them deserved the fallout. she didn't rly want to spent a decade without her mother and helping a v unprepared billy raise a child. :(

before neil's slaying, at one point susan comes home whilst a babysitting billy's stereo is blaring and she's like?? 'the heck?? ur

gonna make the bby cry,' >:(and billy's all, 'no, this is literally why it isn't crying anymore,' and shuts off the stereo to prove it. sure enough, ducky wakes up and promptly starts bawling. susan is speechless, totally mystified.

even long after neil's slaying, when ducky's living with her siblings in cali, she cannot sleep unless she blasts a lil metal before bedtime. it puts her at ease.

ducky looks more like neil than susan. has neil's hair, neil's eyes. gets the tall genes from both of them tho. grows tall v early on tbh, shoots up like a fucking weed. ends up around billy's height even going from puberty blockers to hrt. ducky does not have susan's proportionately long legs, she's got more of a long torso.

speaking of susan's legs for days, uh. part of the emotional abuse on neil's end was constantly degrading and nitpicking her appearance to the point that susan felt like a hideous blob. while she's in prison she genuinely doesn't notice when other inmates fight over her. even when one fight gets so bad the shivs come out and one lady gives the other a buck fifty to the face, susan is completely oblivious that she's what's being fought over.

ducky doesn't just collect rubber ducks, she kinda waddles like a duck too, is the exact opposite of athletic. max tries to teach her to skateboard on numerous occasions, all of which end in scrapes and bruises, a grand total of three prompting visits to the emergency room. billy tries to play basketball with ducky and the poor thing can't get the ball in the hoop even once. he also accidentally knocks her out when she fails to catch his pass and the ball hits her so hard in the face that when she drops, billy swears he sees the lil' cartoon birds flying around her head.

ducky is v good at building things tho. has an affinity for super complicated lego projects. makes a hammerhead shark for billy's 30th bday and it's literally life-size.

max sticks around even after she's eighteen both to help billy with ducky and bc, like. yk. it's a modern au. equipped with the modern cost of living in cali. neil's life insurance only went so far. max saves more staying at home, goes to community college and works in the

cafeteria on campus. it takes her awhile to graduate bc she changes her major several times, but by the time susan's out, she has her degree...and finds herself working a menial job in a skate shop anyway. yk how it goes tho, lotta competition out there and sadly community college degrees are often undervalued. max likes the skate shop tho. quickly rises from an associate to managerial position bc she's v good at setting the customers up with the right boards.

susan's return is p awkward for everyone, to say the least. at this point max has worked thru most of that residual, complex anger, and she and susan have written each other letters over the yrs where the reality of the household was addressed v frankly and she didn't hold back expressing those feelings at all. nonetheless, some traces of anger still remain and while she's glad to have her mom back, susan too is adjusting to life outside in an entirely different state and she's not quite the person max remembers.

susan actually has a lot of trouble coping with freedom. even before being incarcerated, she lived according to neil's rules and demands. being completely and utterly in charge of herself is a struggle to adapt to. sometimes she asks billy and max permission for small, odd things neither of them would ever care abt and it just. makes max. so, so sad.

billy is often ??? when it comes to susan. tbvh he's grateful she killed neil and that fucks with his head a lil. bc neil was his parent and yes, he did love him. he hates that he loved him, but he did. and he wonders if that love is why he didn't kill neil himself, bc he 100% thought abt it. he also has no idea if susan regrets it or not, has no clue whatever her various apologies over the yrs were for. killing neil, being promoted to parent against his will, or for errything that came even before the night of the slaying. susan turning away, shutting her eyes to his bruises.

also at first billy's unsure if susan thinks she's going to be head of household upon her return. since she's like, the oldest and natal mother of max n ducky. this defo reveals itself to be an untrue concern in every way, quite the opposite. susan can barely comprehend freedom, let alone being in charge. some days susan dead ass asks billy permission to leave the dinner table even if she's the one who cooked dinner.

ducky is also ??? when it comes to susan for v different reasons. she's known the exact circumstances of susan's incarceration since she was seven. before that, billy and max would be vague abt what she was locked up for and they never rly talked abt neil much beyond, 'ur better off without him, he sucked big time.'

max is the one who eventually goes into graphic detail with ducky abt the whole thing bc she remembers that night and what happened before susan got home. how she had to step in bc she was fucking terrified neil was going to literally kill baby ducky. how she actually hit neil for the v first time even tho she'd wanted to many, many times. how she hit and kept hitting him, pummeling her fists against his body until he put ducky down. but once he did, that meant it was his turn. and ofc, neil hit much harder. max vividly recalls how badly her eye throbbed, swollen shut for two days. her nose wasn't broken but it bled a whole lot, over her lips, into her mouth, down her chin, and the taste of blood lingered awfully.

ducky is naturally disturbed by the whole thing but her feelings toward susan aren't as complicated as max's or even billy's for that matter. she doesn't remember neil at all. and while she's also written and received letters from susan, as well as the illicitly ordered rubber ducks, and she knows in a distant way susan is her mother, it doesn't actually *feel* like she is. it feels more like susan is a kind of...special penpal, tbh. billy remains the person ducky goes to for parental guidance.

ducky still wants to get closer to susan tho. when the time comes for her to legally change her name, she asks susan to write a list of names she would've considered had she been afab, and goes on to choose one from the list.

even before she came out tho, ducky was p much called by her nickname at home anyway. both billy and max knew neil had picked her (dead)name out and neither of them rly wanted to acknowledge that. neither of them rly wanted to deal with the remaining traces of neil in their lives any more than they had to, any more than they already grappled with.

ducky has quite the degree of success getting susan into legos. this surprises both max and billy. but in prison susan would do crafts

whenever available and she enjoyed stacking cups and stuff during rec time, so it's not hard to translate these hobbies into legos. they build p neat things together sometimes— however, the hammerhead is all ducky, come billy's birthday. she wanted to do that specially for her big bro, all by herself.

now, susan's birthday present to billy is a big ass breakdown after midnight. lots of snotty sobbing. she hugs him so hard she's hurting him a lil tbh and just apologizes profusely for errything and thanks him for taking care of her kids even tho he shouldn't have had to. billy thanks susan too— it takes a min for her to figure out what for. bc they don't talk abt that. no one's mentioned that since she's been out.

susan just nods a lil bit and lets go. they eat some more cake. life goes on. everything gets less awkward in time. susan stops asking for permission to move freely. ducky keeps filling up the shelves with rubber ducks of every variety, and dnd becomes another one of her interests in middle school, a hobby max nostalgically revisits with her. billy's returned to surfing recreationally. swims a lot, finds it soothing and it helps keep him in shape. is a good low-impact workout to balance the weightlifting he still defo does, stereo blaring.

getting a job for convicted felons is difficult but eventually susan finds work on a commercial goat farm. she learns to herd goats and takes them out to areas where there are invasive grasses or dry brush particularly vulnerable to wildfire. the goats graze on the invasive vegetation and the dry brush, which helps prevent wildfires. no, i'm srs, this is an actual thing. she likes the goats a lot. they're easier to talk to than ppl, sometimes.

Author's Note:

<https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/>

[Women_who_kill_in_response_to_domestic_violence_Full_report.pdf](#)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Killing_of_Richard_Challen

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa98420f2e6b1ba0c874e42/t/602a9a87e96acc025de5de67/1613404821139/CWJ_WomenWhoKill_Rpt_WEB-3+small.pdf

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1.1.1.1&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/philmatier/article/Woman-imprisoned-for-killing-abusive-husband-15506635.php#photo-19849998>

<https://www.wwltv.com/article/news/investigations/katie-moore/women-serving-life-sentences-for-killing-their-abusers-are-getting-a-second-chance/289-c7830e4e-6c4b-4a8f-a12a-f3a202deb07c>

<https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/in-the-news/women-serve-longer-prison-sentences-after-killing-abusers>

<https://abc7.com/ventura-county-goats-wildfires-brush-simi-valley/1333694/>

<https://goatseatweeds.com/frequently-asked-questions/>

<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/national/goats-used-as-a-tool-to-help-clear-brush-prevent-wildfires-in-western-u-s>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/14/us/goats-used-in-california-to-prevent-brush-fires.html>

<https://i.ebayimg.com/images/i/230678040324-0-1/s-l1000.jpg>

<https://ducksinthefwindow.com/shop-by-category/this-that/>

<https://amsterdamduckstore.com/rubber-duck/the-flame-rubber-duck/>

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/77/e6/f3/77e6f3d93706297963811c19d0b5d322.jpg>